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3 March 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting to Prepare Vietnam Planning Draft  
for Secretary McNamara and the President,  
3 March 1964

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. William Bundy, Chairman; Mr. McNaughton,  
Mr. Sullivan, General Arthis, General Vogt,  
Admiral Bluett, [redacted]

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1. At Ray Cline's request I represented him this afternoon at this meeting called by Mr. Bundy to discuss the first draft of a memorandum Mr. Bundy had prepared for the President on US courses of action with respect to South and North Vietnam. Guided by this afternoon's discussion, Mr. Bundy will prepare a revised draft to be given to Secretary McNamara this evening, and (with annexes) to the principals tomorrow; the President has scheduled a meeting on this subject for 4:30 p.m., Thursday, 5 March. The chief substantive development at this afternoon's meeting was a general dampening of Mr. Bundy's textual enthusiasm for Track III (overt US action against the DRV). Mr. Bundy's revised draft will say, in sum, that we are not yet ready to say whether Track III can be recommended or carried out in view of the extraordinary problems involved concerning military questions, world pressures upon the US to negotiate, uncertainty that this Track would cause the DRV to cut off or drastically reduce its support of the VC, and uncertainty whether the Khanh government can make the requisite progress -- whatever the US course.

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2. Mr. Bundy's first draft tended to brush aside Tracks I (unattributed actions) and II (overt US actions not directly against the DRV). I objected to I and II being brushed off so summarily and urged that, at least for presentation purposes in the draft, they be given greater play. [redacted] came [redacted] very heavily on this same point, emphasizing Track III's disadvantages and suggesting to Bill Bundy that he not try to ram III down the throats of the readers. [redacted] also stressed, with considerable support around the table, that US actions in South Vietnam had the most importance for the US problem at hand. The revised draft will come out, in its implied message, about where the (much longer) Johnson sub-committee does.

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3. At Ray Cline's request, I raised the possibility of a Lebanon-type US commitment of troops in Saigon, and gave Bill Bundy a copy of Ray's memo to the DCI on the subject (of 3 March). Bundy was not very receptive to the idea, nor did discussion of it reveal much support for it in the room.

4. [redacted] will prepare an annex for the revised draft, tomorrow morning, setting forth a brief discussion of possible Tracks I, II, III. He invites comment on a rough draft he distributed to us at the meeting. I intended to give him some thoughts concerning his (fairly relaxed) estimate of enemy reactions. His draft also raised the question of whether sensitive intelligence should be released to strengthen the US case.

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